senate had formally announced the result of the plebiscite, and the Emperor not only had guaranteed the popular rights as secured by the Revolution, but had promised to transmit them unimpaired to his children. But where were the children? That same night, at the last hour, the Empress, who in the eyes of the Church had so far been only a concubine, obtained by the Pope's insistence what was the chief desire of her heart, but what had so often been refused by her husband — a secret marriage to him by ecclesiastical rite. Would this work a miracle and remove the reproach of her barrenness? In any case it removed the bar to her coronation by the Pope, of which nothing had been said in the preliminary negotiations. This act completed the preparations. The great church had been renovated and gorgeously decorated; the brilliant costumes, the imperial scepter, the jeweled crown, were all in readiness; rehearsals, too, had been held; and still further, by means of ingeniously devised puppets, every participant had been carefully taught his exact movements. It had been suggested that, like former sovereigns, Napoleon should, on the eve of his coronation, repair to the sanctuary, confess, and receive absolution; but he drew back as before a sacrilege. In the official program of the ceremonies it was also arranged that "Their Majesties" should receive the holy communion; but the article was dropped, and it was currently reported that the reason was Napoleon's fear lest the Italian prelates should poison the elements. The Holy Father was not urgent, for he feared a more serious rebuff than any he had yet received. At the outset he had inquired whether, according to immemorial custom, he was himself to set the crown in place on the head of the sovereign. "I will arrange that/' had been Napoleon's reply, and the imperial decision was still unknown.